



B O N U S C H A P T E R

Stories of Transformation From Coach to Coach Leader

Along our journey in education, we have met many fantastic school leaders across the United States with a deep desire to be their best selves, continually growing and learning. Their stories have inspired us and continue to do so, lifting our hearts and spirits, along with the dedication to continue to spread the word and the skills of being a Coach Leader. We intentionally wanted the word *transforming* in the title of this book because we were not after transactional growth, which can impact portions of leadership work. Rather, we were after transformational experiences for ourselves and those with whom we work. Transformations bring about forever changes in the way we lead and live.

In this bonus chapter, we invite you to witness and read about the real-life stories of transformation from leader to Coach Leader, as listed in table 1 (page XX). We are forever thankful for each of these individuals' belief in our mission and for their willingness to share their stories with you. Please enjoy the stories of real Coach Leaders, and we look forward to hearing your story of transformation from leader to Coach Leader!

Table 1: Stories of Transformation From Leader to Coach Leader

Andy Camarda PCC, Principal, and Consultant (Virginia)	Michele McWilliams PCC, Principal, Leadership Consultant, and Gallup Coach (Arkansas, Texas, and New Mexico)
Cheryl Close MCC, Business Owner, District Leader, and Principal (Texas)	Nina Morel PCC, Professor, and Executive Director (Tennessee)
Dave Curry PCC, Principal, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Superintendent (California and Colorado)	DeAnna Reed-Brown Behavioral Coach (Texas)
Carl Dethloff Consultant, Principal, and Superintendent (Texas)	Teresa Lynn Rensch ACC, Principal, Director, and Superintendent (California and Idaho)

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Sydney Dion PCC, Instructional Coach and Consultant (California and Colorado)	Reba Schumacher PCC, Principal, Director, and Results Coaching Senior Instructor (Texas)
Elita Driskill PCC and Executive Director (Texas)	Pam Smith PCC, Principal, Director, Assistant to the Superintendent, and Results Coaching Senior Instructor (Texas)
Shannon Fuller Superintendent, Principal, and Director of Curriculum and Instruction (Texas)	Hank Staggs Principal, Professor, and Director (Tennessee)
Gerald Hudson Principal, Director, Area Director, and Superintendent (Texas)	Nathan Steenport PCC, Principal and Consultant (Texas)
Jeff Mann Director of School Improvement and Leadership Development and Gallup Coach (Texas)	Catherine Stephens Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent (Tennessee)
Logan Mallonee Coach, Assistant Superintendent, Principal, and Teacher (California)	

ANDY CAMARDA

PCC, Principal, and Consultant (Virginia)

Prior to learning about the skills and tools and mindset of being a Coach Leader from Results Coaching, as a principal, I spent a lot of time telling and not a lot of time asking. It wasn't necessarily in a bad way. Our teachers would come to me for advice, and I'd give them helpful tips, or I would plan with our coaches really strong professional development, supportive of teachers' practices, and I'd do anything I could to take care of the teachers. But no matter what, even as our school got better and better, and our scores and results improved, every time there was an opinion survey on me, as the principal, and on school climate, it always came back with the same response. There were always a bunch of teachers who felt not respected or valued as teachers, and it always made me curious because I always felt I was supportive, and I was always giving them really good advice. But then I started my work with my coach, Coach Karen, and I took the Leadership Coaching for High Performance seminar, a four-day seminar, and that was a game changer!

I shifted my practice! I began to ask a lot more questions and tell a lot less! I began to reframe teachers' concerns into their commitments, paraphrased actively, and supported teachers by helping them solve their own problems. I also wrapped a "SCARF" around all of my interactions.

As I started my Coach Leader journey, I even redesigned how I did my observations and feedback from teachers. Instead of telling them what they did right or what they did wrong,

I asked them. I had them critique their own lessons and say what *they* felt, what went well, what didn't go well, and what they would do differently. I provided feedback for them in a way that they preferred. I asked what they wanted to learn more about in the lesson that we had worked on together, and I provided feedback in a way that was brain friendly and supportive of their learning. I made a point of ensuring that teachers had status, certainty, and autonomy built on relationships and fairness. How they did it was left to them. How they solved problems was left to them. And it became quite apparent that they didn't need *me* to tell them what to do. They needed me to inspire them and believe in them, and it was a huge difference maker at our school.

Another big shift in being a Coach Leader was how, as a school, we did professional development. The words *teacher agency* became the standard of how we planned and then implemented our staff development—basically, applying coaching and positive psychology principles to brain-friendly professional learning. We began to receive a lot more feedback from our teachers in terms of the instructional challenges they were having and some of the instructional solutions that they were trying out in the classroom. We used that input to plan professional learning opportunities that they could offer for each other. Teachers learning with other teachers. Teachers teaching other teachers.

When people ask me what it means to be a Coach Leader, I always think about Christopher Peterson from the University of Michigan, who was a psychology professor and director of the Michigan Positive Psychology Center. He said that positive leadership can be summed up in three words: “Other people matter.” And if you think about it, that really is good leadership, because you’re putting other people first. You’re paying them great attention when they’re talking, you’re listening to them to the point that you can hear their thoughts and feelings behind their words. You’re cheering on their successes; you show that you believe in them, and you inspire them and support them, even when they’re struggling. Other people matter.

And as I shifted from what I thought was a very effective principal to a Coach Leader, I saw the impact. I saw the impact not only in continued high-performance results from our school but also in how people felt. I started to see in surveys that teachers really began to feel valued and respected, and I saw a very strong, collaborative, positive climate. So, I am excited about my role, as I have shifted from being a principal to what we say now, “Coach Leader,” and I’m excited about the future, not only for myself but for all of us as educators.

CHERYL CLOSE

MCC, Business Owner, District Leader, and Principal (Texas)

When I began training with Results Coaching, I was an elementary principal looking for a program to bring to my school district for leadership development, especially for new principals. I had been researching elements of the best possible leadership development programs and knew I needed to learn more about coaching.

A colleague and I, based on our work with Results Coaching through their five levels of courses, created a leadership development program for principals to implement during their

first three years. The new leadership development program was coaching based because of what we learned from Results Coaching. The district adopted it and used it exclusively for more than ten years. It was awarded the International Prism Award by the International Coaching Federation (ICF)—North Texas.

Through all the learning, coaching, and mentoring the founders of Results Coaching provided, I came to realize that I wanted to become the best coach I could be to work with other leaders. I completed all five levels of coach training with Results Coaching as well as several opportunities for continued learning. I was also coached by one of the founders for three years. I earned my Professional Certified Coach (PCC) credentials from ICF after completing their training.

I know that coaching has the power to transform lives. I think there are so many opportunities for people to utilize the support of a thinking partner (coach) to get unstuck, to be their best self, and to move forward. Our world needs great coaches! After retiring from public education, I formed my own coaching business in 2011 and have had a successful business since. I was a cofounder of the Texas Coaches Coalition in 2020, serving as president elect and president. Additionally, I have served on the ICF—North Texas board for over two years. I have close to ten thousand coaching hours and received my Master Certified Coach (MCC) credentials from ICF in 2022. Now, I coach executives, offer training, and serve as a mentor to other coaches. I am a faculty member of Positive Coaching Solutions.

Results Coaching changed the trajectory of my life, and I could not be more grateful to the four fantastic founders!

DAVE CURRY

PCC, Principal, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and Superintendent (California and Colorado)

As a principal in the early 2000s, my leadership style was clear from my behaviors and language: I was a manager of tasks, not a leader of people. My approach was transactional, strategic, and authoritative. I was always in motion, rarely finding time for meaningful conversations about the real work with teachers. Meetings were boring and uneventful, and I couldn't understand why people weren't changing their strategies to improve student learning. I failed to honor people, history, or tradition and tried implementing changes too quickly. My impact as a leader, using the skills I had, was minimal at best. While I had good relationships with some teachers, many others saw me as merely a manager. I was consumed by accountability and regulations, leaving little time for deep conversations that could drive real change.

In the early 2000s, our school district faced a new level of accountability, like many others. As a principal, I tried various strategies to reach the changing student population and improve performance on standardized tests. After a year or so, I was moved to the district office to lead changes that would enhance performance throughout the district. My colleague Steve Carney and I enlisted the help of the county service center and

began researching effective practices in other districts. We discovered Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) but realized something crucial was missing in making PLCs truly effective.

In 2008, at a National Staff Development Center [now Learning Forward] conference in Washington, DC, Steve attended a workshop by a group of Results Coaching educators offering short coaching sessions. I watched from the doorway as Karen Anderson coached him. His experience was life-changing. We both knew this was the missing piece enabling educators to maximize their work in PLCs.

That spring, we arranged for Results Coaching to train a group of administrators and teachers in coaching. This training was the foundation of a coaching system that we implemented across all schools in our district. It has endured to this day, fostering leadership from within and changing the district's culture to adapt to the evolving needs of student populations and regulations.

My transformational insight was that, before discovering coaching, my efforts were repeatedly yielding the same poor results. Taking my first coaching course felt like a rebirth. I seized the opportunity to effect real change. Coaching transformed every conversation I had, and I quickly saw positive results from supporting others in their thinking.

Now, as a Coach Leader, I firmly believe that a coaching mindset is the cornerstone of every interaction. I approach each encounter with genuine curiosity, active listening, empathy, powerful questioning, and positive intent. My language reflects these behaviors, fundamentally altering my communication style.

I observed significant performance improvements within a few years of starting my coaching journey, especially among English learners. Recognizing the potential to transform education, we trained a select group of teachers to support each school. The impact was so profound that other staff members became curious about our efforts.

Excited to share the changes I experienced as a student, I led a session on NeuroLeadership by David Rock with all district staff at an opening convocation. This session transformed daily interactions, which included board members, custodians, food service workers, bus drivers, classroom assistants, clerical staff, teachers, and administrators. Soon, everyone was using terms like *SCARF*, *TARP*, and *hardwiring*. The impact of their new learning was witnessed on every campus.

Continuing my district's journey, we advanced our coaching skills, pursued certification, and practiced coaching in triads. Our coaches became sought-after leaders within and beyond the district. As I moved into a superintendency in a nearby district, I used my coaching skills to support staff, students, and parents until my retirement in 2020.

Postretirement, I pursued my PCC certification and dedicated myself to sharing coaching with educators. I now teach educational leadership at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, and work with administrators and teachers across the United States through Results Coaching and Solution Tree. This journey from a task manager to a Coach Leader has been transformative for me and the countless educators and students impacted along the way.

CARL DETHLOFF

Consultant, Principal, and Superintendent (Texas)

In 1992, I started my teaching career at Coppell Independent School District. Little did I know, I would soon meet a learning hero who would positively impact my leadership for the next thirty-three years. Kathy Kee fundamentally changed how I approach communication, leadership, and relationships (both personal and professional). As I reflect on twenty-nine years in leadership roles in public education, beginning as an assistant principal and completing my service in public schools as superintendent, it is not lost on me the transition I made from a bureaucratic leader to one who values effective communication and committed listening. This shift was primarily due to the leadership coaching of Kathy Kee and her colleagues. Results Coaching's leadership coaching has served as the anchor for my continued growth in multiple districts, including Coppell Independent School District, College Station Independent School District, and San Angelo Independent School District. These coaching tenets still serve me well as guideposts as I navigate my second career with a nonprofit that supports public education and equitable funding in Texas.

Before my induction into leadership coaching, the typical administrative model focused on telling, directing, and strictly adhering to written policy and rules, with consequences for unwanted behaviors. Results Coaching shifted my approach to include effective communication using empathetic listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, and reflective feedback to generate reflective, conversational environments built on trust. I consider myself very fortunate to have experienced coaching so early in my professional career. It changed my perspective and created constructive and inspiring learning cultures that benefit students and staff.

There were many occasions when I picked up the phone and contacted Kathy to coach me through a crucial conversation that I knew would be difficult at best. During these calls, I would feverishly take notes, write down a few powerful questions and sentence starters, and hang up feeling much more confident, relaxed, and hopeful. In fact, during my retirement, I recently went through a few boxes from my office that were stored in my garage. In these boxes, I still had some notes with tacks or tape attached to the back from when I taped them inside a desk drawer or tacked them behind my desk. The following were my reminders as I was prepping for challenging meetings. Seeing them again brought a smile to my face.

- “SCARF—the elements of safe conversation”
- “Do you see me, and do I matter?”
- “Coach a person forward from point A to B”
- “Which, given . . .”
- “I’ve listed a few choices; which do you prefer?”
- “Mr. —— , you are wanting a school system that provides a [INSERT RULE], and in your opinion, we have failed”

- “Focus on the solution, not the problem”
- “You’re frustrated because . . .”
- “You’re wishing that . . .”
- “You feel like the district has not listened to you [because] . . .”
- “Status—what I think you think about me”
- “Not always the content, but always the relationship”

I don’t rely on these reminders today. I desire to be coach-like in all my interactions. I’m so thankful for the knowledge, the skills, and, most importantly, the mindset I’ve always tried to exemplify during my journey, in leadership and in life!

SYDNEY DION

PCC, Instructional Coach and Consultant (California and Colorado)

Before working with Results Coaching, I accepted a position unique to education, where teachers considered skilled in their craft and disciplines trained other teachers. This academic coach position required me to work with principals, all teachers within a school, and teachers across the school district. My role shifted from teaching students reading and writing strategies to delving into adult learning techniques, discussing student achievement data, and refining instructional methods. While I had a firm grasp of student behavior and effective curriculum delivery as a teacher, transitioning to an academic coach presented communication challenges with teachers, colleagues, and administrators. Only some educators would embrace my methods and perspectives to improve student outcomes. Educators I sought to support shared this realization, challenging the notion that a single approach could universally enhance student achievement.

Expressing the need for academic coaches to take a different approach to working with peers, administrators, and teachers, I had the opportunity to attend a Results Coaching program, which offered several levels of training on how to be a Coach Leader. In the first seminar, Leadership Coaching for High Performance, we were introduced to a new way of speaking and delved into building trust and safety through communication. Presuming positive intent offered a mindset understanding of how important it is for individuals to plan how they will change and proceed, rather than for me to share my idea or plan for them. This new way of being changed my relationship with my colleagues and began to impact how we partnered in our work to increase student achievement and build a culture of mutual respect within the PLC at the school. I was no longer seen as the expert in literacy but as a coach with whom teachers could bounce ideas or share their challenges, knowing that I wasn’t there to fix or solve the problem but to hold a space for them to think through their next steps or reflect on what could be different. They knew that I had adopted a coaching mindset and that I believed they had the answers. They knew I would listen, ask powerful questions, and provide reflective feedback to create space for them to think through their goals and next steps.

From my initial training with Results Coaching in the district to my ongoing journey toward earning my PCC and Advanced Certification in Team Coaching (ACTC) credentials through ICF, I continue to advocate for the power of a coaching mindset in my interactions with professional leaders and teams. I collaborate with individual leaders as they navigate challenging conversations and strategic meetings, trusting in their expertise to guide them. I offer opportunities for leaders to plan for, rehearse, or reflect on situations.

By embedding these principles into team coaching practices, teams can cultivate a collaborative and supportive environment where they thrive, achieve their goals, and continually enhance their performance.

As a Coach Leader today, I believe I play a pivotal role in inspiring, motivating, and guiding individuals and teams toward organizational success, fostering a culture of learning and growth. I leverage coaching skills to unlock potential, foster resilience, and cultivate high-performance teams.

ELITA DRISKILL

PCC and Executive Director (Texas)

Leadership roles had frequently been offered to me without me seeking them, largely because I demonstrated responsibility and a keen willingness to work hard. With little leadership training, instinct and goodwill served as my compass points. Sometimes, while trying to serve others, I would ask questions to satisfy curiosity or gain clarity, and the questions would be received like a small, explosive charge. Often, taking charge meant pointing directions and persuading others to move in that direction. When polite persuasion didn't work, sometimes I applied tactics with heavier pressure. Leadership as a professional looked difficult, felt difficult, and was not especially rewarding.

When I was first introduced to coaching, it opened my eyes to a skillful, respectful, and effective way to lead. As a member of a rapidly growing district, I was given the opportunity to lead mentor teacher work and was provided with training. As a part of this training, Brenda Kaylor, a successful leader of new teacher support, agreed to sit down with me for a couple of days to help me get started on the work.

We sat at Brenda's kitchen table for two full days. My expectation was that she would share structures, steps, guidelines, mentor resources, and new teacher resources and, in general, would tell me how to replicate the system she had helped create and support. Brenda didn't operate like any leader I had ever met. She asked me tough questions. When I answered, she paused, paraphrased, and probed to gain greater clarity. When I thought she was seeking clarity for herself, she was actually supporting my thinking.

In the evenings, after meeting with Brenda, my colleague and I worked feverishly to find answers to the questions we had been discussing all day. No one had ever talked to me like that. As we left the mentor training, I asked Brenda how she learned to lead that way. She replied that she was a trained coach. She used her coaching skills to help support our work. That experience began my journey and changed everything!

After that meeting, I read everything I could find about coaching, sought training, and eventually found that Results Coaching had just been contracted to train a select group of people. Interested individuals had to apply and be accepted to participate in this training. Fortunately, I was accepted into the training, and so many of the mysteries of good leadership were revealed and practiced throughout the training. What a gift!

Everything changed for me—how I talked to myself, saw possibilities instead of potholes, thought about others, communicated with others, and approached leadership. Coaching offered me the leadership language to treat others with respect, challenge their thinking without hurting them or pushing them to do things my way, and engage in deep, rich, thoughtful conversations that led to productive actions. Classroom teaching allowed me to produce real change and provided a purpose for my work. I never wanted to leave classroom teaching until I learned the power of coaching. Because of coach-like leadership, I could see how moving into other forms of leadership would produce changes and serve others in ways that I valued. Coaching training led me to become a campus instructional coach, one of the most fulfilling roles of my career. Walking with teachers to explore instruction was rewarding and challenging, producing changes on our campus. Later, after several other leadership opportunities, I had the privilege of becoming a director of professional learning, supporting over one hundred coaches in the eleventh largest district in Texas. Coach-like leadership helped me serve others and open doors for their leadership growth. Systemic change became possible.

An added bonus of coaching was the improvement of personal relationships. Oh, yeah—it's more than being a more effective professional; it benefits my personal life as well. Learning to operate in a way that supports others' self-direction, helping them see their own possibilities and construct their own best paths, has greatly enriched my collaborative partnerships and personal relationships.

SHANNON FULLER

Superintendent, Principal, and Director of Curriculum and Instruction (Texas)

Before I experienced Results Coaching professional learning, support, and coaching, my leadership approach was characterized by reactive communication and impromptu decision making and problem solving for my teachers. This style consumed my time, and I constantly felt behind in my responsibilities. I lacked the necessary skills to effectively nurture and coach those under my guidance. My impact as a leader was inconsistent. I relied on chance occurrences, sometimes stumbling on positive outcomes through reactive responses. I rarely planned my conversations or set clear goals for desired outcomes, resulting in unpredictable impacts.

Attending Results Coaching seminars was a turning point. Initially, the coaching skills had the most profound impact on me. Concepts like active listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, and offering reflective feedback introduced me to a new realm of

possibilities. These skills sharpened my abilities, allowing me to evolve into a more effective supporter of others and enabling me to bring out the best in myself and others.

My transformation through Results Coaching was profound and multifaceted. Initially, I transitioned from a reactive to a proactive mindset, where I began to approach leadership with intentionality rather than relying on chance occurrences. This shift enabled me to plan conversations and set clear goals for desired outcomes, making my impact more predictable and purposeful. Furthermore, I underwent a significant evolution in my communication style. I transitioned from being off the cuff and reactive to being more deliberate and strategic in my language choices. This transformation allowed me to convey messages more clearly, inspire others, and positively influence outcomes. My transformation was profound and multifaceted, characterized by a comprehensive enhancement of my leadership capabilities, interpersonal skills, and communication effectiveness, enabling me to create a more supportive and empowering environment for those I lead and serve.

I now firmly believe in the transformative power of coaching and self-investment. I actively support and encourage others to grow while investing in my development. This mindset drives my behaviors and language, fostering a culture of learning, support, and personal advancement. As a Coach Leader, my impact is marked by empowerment, growth, and transformation. I guide and support others to unlock their potential, achieve their goals, and confidently navigate challenges. Through active listening, empathy, and strategic guidance, I foster an environment where individuals thrive, and teams flourish. My coaching approach cultivates resilience, self-awareness, and a culture of continuous improvement, resulting in sustainable success and fulfillment for those I lead.

GERALD HUDSON

Principal, Director, Area Director, and Superintendent (Texas)

I think, as a leader, I was a person who was following what my mentors did. They were good examples of leadership, so I emulated a couple of principals and leaders I knew. The questions were direct, and they seemed on top of it, always aware of things. The mindset was always about the task as well as the people. The language was more direct. I didn't ask the right questions; I was asking yes-or-no questions. It took me a long time to get to the issues. I saw my leaders do it and thought that was the best way to handle the situation.

I wasn't getting the results I wanted. There was a gap between my expectations and the performance of the people I supervised. The intentions were great in what I needed them to see, but I wasn't getting people to see what I needed them to see. We all say everyone has sight, but not everyone has the same vision. I was trying to get them to see the vision I wanted them to see for the students and the organization, as well as what students needed in the classroom to be successful.

I thought I was doing fairly well when I became a high school principal. I learned about a program called the Texas Policy Evaluation Project (TxPEP). It was for campuses in the first or second year of low performance. Fortunately, other principals were allowed to join the program. As a young principal always looking to be his absolute best, I thought this

would be a great program for me to attend, because if they're teaching someone in the first or second year of low performance how to be better, it's pretty smart for me to learn that now before I'm in that same situation! Once in the program, I was assigned Bob Carter as my coach. The experience was phenomenal. He challenged me in so many different ways. He really became a thinking partner. Most of the people I had before him were mentors—they told me what I should do or what they would do. But that style really wasn't helping me develop as a leader. My coach challenged my thinking process and made sure it was my stuff—what it looked like, what it sounded like, how I would achieve it, and what it would look like if everything went well. The bottom line is, it allowed me to understand what I needed, not what everyone else wanted me to do. That actually propelled me to want to be a coach; I saw how it awakened something in me. I realized what I was doing as a leader wasn't working, and the only way for me to be a leader was to coach them to excellence. So, I decided to be a coach to transform the organization from within and hold people able, not to enable them but to hold them able to do the job God gifted them to do.

I began to become more self-aware about my behaviors and language. First was self-reflection. I always look at what I must do to see something different if something doesn't go right. Then, it became asking questions, giving value statements, challenging people's thoughts, holding up the standards and expectations, and allowing people to reflect on their actions by putting the questioning back on them. For instance, as an assistant principal, if a student was acting up, I'd ask the teacher, "Did you call the parent?" That's a yes-or-no question. But it's also a loaded question. They might respond, "Yes, but I left a message" or "Yes, but nobody called me back." With my new coaching skills, I'd ask a question like this instead: "When you called the parent, what did they say?" It's a positive presupposition. I'm actually declaring that I believed you called the parent, so what did they say? If the teacher says, "I haven't called the parent," I'd respond, "How are you wanting to learn what they have to say?" So, really, I am giving them the tools to do their job effectively.

Listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, and reflective questioning became my friends. Ninety percent of all parents who come into my office want to be heard. Learning how to paraphrase in coaching offers parents a place where they feel heard because they can hear that from my response; I really hear them. They see that I am fully engaged, not just with my ears and eyes but also with my heart.

I firmly believe that student outcomes won't change until adult behavior changes. We focus on adult behavior and coaching; how do we get the excellence out of people by asking questions, challenging their thinking, and using coaching skills and tools? I use different levels of questions. People want to do their absolute best, and it's my job to remove barriers so they can. It's to the point now that most of my staff ask the questions before I ask them. They already know what I'm thinking because these are our typical questions. As it trickles down in the organization, I coach them, and they turn around and coach their leaders. I am a huge champion of coaching, so our leaders in the district, new or old, must have Results Coaching's first two levels of training in coaching.

My biggest impact as a leader is that people see the effect of coaching. I'll use this as an example. I worked in another school district as an area director. There were seven of us.

Of the seven, probably three of us used coach leadership versus the direct or authoritarian models. I will say I had really great results with my campuses. My campuses all flourished. We never had campuses go backward. I held them able to do their job to the best of their ability, which created a good synergy.

My job was not to do the work but to make sure the work got done. The only way to truly oversee the work is to trust and inspire your people and believe in them. The only way you can do that is through effective coaching. That's why I consider myself a Coach Leader. That's the best way to extract the best out of people.

There have also been situations where my coaching has shown people that they're on the wrong seat or the wrong bus. People have made choices regarding leaving, which is not necessarily a bad thing. I've had people thank me for giving them an opportunity while I am in the process of letting them go. That lets them know it's not a one-time deal; with my ongoing coaching and work with people, I am giving them every opportunity to be successful.

JEFF MANN

Director of School Improvement and Leadership Development and Gallup Coach (Texas)

As a campus principal, before undergoing Results Coaching training, my mindset was centered on problem solving for my teachers. I believed my role was to take on their issues as my own, solve them, and provide ready-made solutions. This approach consumed a significant amount of my time and led me to fall behind in my responsibilities. My language was often filled with closed questions and prescriptive advice, without much consideration for the specific context of the problems at hand.

As a leader, I felt supportive, encouraging, helpful, and effective in solving my teachers' problems. This felt like the essence of leadership to me: using my knowledge and skills to address the issues my staff brought forward. However, this approach created a dependency model, where their success was tethered to my ability to solve their problems. Often, my solutions were not implemented as intended, leading to repeated issues and minimal overall impact.

My journey with Results Coaching introduced me to several transformative concepts, but the most impactful was powerful paraphrasing. This technique allowed me to truly hear and see the person with whom I was communicating. Using their words and emotions, I became a reflective mirror, helping them understand how they presented their issues. Powerful paraphrasing enabled me to focus on the heart of their concerns and to partner with them toward their first resolution steps.

Connecting with others through conversation has always been a natural strength for me. However, immediately after my first training with Results Coaching in 2018, I realized that my previous approach was more about giving advice than understanding what the other person needed. I delved into the coaching concepts Results Coaching taught and

started incorporating them into my daily interactions. I learned to coach the person, not just address the issue. This shift, I noticed over time, allowed me to become a more effective coach focused on enabling individuals to find their solutions.

Another big change I noticed was my mindset. I have shifted from solving problems to being a thinking partner, helping others solve their own problems. I approach conversations with a clear mind, actively listen to what the other person is saying, and tune into the emotions conveyed through their voice and body language. This shift has allowed me to truly see and hear them, showing that I value and support them in ways I couldn't before.

As director of leadership development and professional learning for a K–12 public school district, I coach current and future leaders. My coaching focuses on supporting our leaders to solve challenges, proactively plan for the future, and ask their staff powerful, growth-oriented questions. Coaching has shifted our conversations from immediate problem solving to future-focused, growth-oriented dialogues. The transformation from a leader to a Coach Leader has enabled me to support my district's leaders more effectively, fostering a culture of self-sufficiency and proactive growth.

LOGAN MALLONEE

Coach, Assistant Superintendent, Principal, and Teacher (California)

I have always believed in multiplying leaders—as Liz Wiseman (2017) describes in her book *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*—but Results Coaching gave me the skills to put this belief into action. Results Coaching language is now ingrained in my work, not an afterthought. Even after fifteen years with my coach from Results Coaching, I am reminded of the basic skills—listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, providing value statements, and so on—and their power to uphold all leaders and their best thinking in the room.

My mindset post–Results Coaching is one of continuous learning and growth. I am committed to ensuring alignment by building relational trust with staff. The Results Coaching training and time with my coach have provided me with a solid foundation of knowledge, and the skills I use with my staff are all based on current research. I continue to test and refine my use of the Results Coaching skills I have been trained in, ensuring they remain the best practices in education for building educator and leadership capacity. Once I have established relational trust, I can use Results Coaching skills to facilitate district goal alignment across sites to meet the overall need of education: student achievement.

One instance that vividly demonstrates the impact of my Results Coaching training is when we, as instructional leaders, agreed to use a walkthrough tool to gather baseline data. One school leader found themselves in a challenging situation, as they did not have any collected data to use in our next planned analysis. Leveraging my Results Coaching skills of providing value statements and upholding competing commitments, I initiated a productive one-on-one coaching conversation with the school leader to support their needs in order to meet the agreements. This conversation, guided by my Results Coaching training, led to the school leader setting their own plan for meeting the agreements. The leader

requested district support to ensure they could get into classrooms, rather than attending to the competing commitment we identified in our conversation. This is just one of many examples that showcases how my Results Coaching training has transformed my mindset and ability to multiply the leaders in the room and meet districtwide academic goals.

MICHELE MCWILLIAMS

PCC, Principal, Leadership Consultant, and Gallup Coach (Arkansas, Texas, and New Mexico)

As a result of learning with Results Coaching, I have transformed as a leader, developing and integrating the principles of being fully present and engaging in active listening. This transformation has allowed me to build stronger, more authentic connections with colleagues, educators, and clients, with deeper levels of trust and safety. With full presence and a coach mindset, I am better able to understand the perspectives and context to enhance collaboration and support.

An emphasis on committed listening, a coach mindset, and a presence for others has allowed me to be a stronger leader, coach, and person. By committing to these practices, I am better equipped to guide other educational leaders in their development, fostering a positive and growth-oriented school culture. My growth journey has reinforced the value of connecting with people, seeing them deeply, and empowering each of them to do their best work each and every day for the future of our students.

NINA MOREL

PCC, Professor, and Executive Director (Tennessee)

Since transitioning from the classroom to an instructional supervisor role for English learner programs in a large school district, I have been captivated by the power of coaching for teacher professional development. In collaboration with my colleague responsible for professional development, I sought ways to better equip classroom teachers to meet the needs of English learners and students. Coaching emerged as a critical tool in our repertoire. We explored various instructional coaching approaches but found it challenging to locate resources that could train coaches to excel. Together, we chronicled our administrative journey of coaching in a book, aiming to guide others on a similar path. Unfortunately, this book was published before I discovered Results Coaching. Results Coaching took everything we learned to the next level.

A colleague from another district shared his transformative experience with Results Coaching, and it dawned on me that coaching could reach new heights when grounded in the competencies and skills of professional coaches.

By then, I had transitioned to a professor role, which provided me the opportunity to undergo Results Coaching's foundational coaching training. This training was unparalleled—each session was meticulously organized, well paced, and focused on mindset and skill development. While I believed I already possessed a coaching mindset, Results

Coaching illuminated the profound impact of the language we use to communicate that mindset. The more I learned, the more compelled I felt to immerse myself in coaching. Over the subsequent years, I completed the comprehensive training process. As a dean, I invited Results Coaching to train my faculty and staff, aspiring to embed this transformative communication style in our interactions with students and each other. Despite my administrative duties often taking precedence over my training, the new language of coaching I acquired significantly enhanced my leadership.

Finally, more than five years after embarking on this journey, I received my Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credentials from ICF through Results Coaching. I launched my own practice, complementing my role in coaching MBA students at the university. With dedicated practice and support from my Results Coaching mentor, I swiftly advanced to PCC and continued to evolve in my coaching, adhering to the principles and mindsets I learned from Results Coaching. Seeing the light in my clients' eyes brings me immense joy when they realize, through the language of possibility and positive presupposition, that they indeed have the right answers within themselves!

DEANNA REED-BROWN

Behavioral Coach (Texas)

As a special education behavioral support coach, I was encouraged to attend Results Coaching's Leadership Coaching for High Performance seminar. During the seminar, the other behavioral coach and I learned invaluable tools that influenced the way we interacted with and coached our teachers.

We truly used and witnessed the impact of learning about SCARF (status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, fairness), committed listening, paraphrasing, presuming positive intent, and reflective feedback. The knowledge and skills had a positive influence on the increase of teacher retention for the current school year.

Due to the high-stress nature of being a behavioral teacher, there is usually high turnover and attrition each year. We believe the intentional support we provided truly had an impact on our former new teachers, who are now returning teachers. We owe a huge thanks to Results Coaching for their excellent training! I'm forever grateful.

TERESA LYNN RENSCH

ACC, Principal, Director, and Superintendent (California and Idaho)

Before Results Coaching, the notion of a Coach Leader was nonexistent. I did not understand mindsets and active listening. I did not know how to listen to emotions and beliefs—in other words, to listen for what is under the surface, not being said. My school district brought Results Coaching's leadership coaching into our school district for the school principals. I knew nothing about the training except that I was supposed to attend. The training was five days before the start of school. I showed up to the training in a hat and with my computer. I immediately found a seat, turned on my laptop, and buried my head

into work. You will quickly learn, especially working with Kathy Kee, Vicky Dearing, and Karen Anderson, that you do not get to be a passive participant in Results Coaching. And you will quickly learn that the training is too valuable. You will want to listen and be an active participant.

After Results Coaching, not only did I complete level 1 as a model student (you can confirm that with the trainers), I proceeded to complete level 2, 3, 4, and 5 and now have my ACC credentials. What I have learned is that I would never go back. The impact that I have had on staff and students correlates directly with my being a trained Results Coaching Coach Leader. The following are skills I have learned as a Coach Leader.

- I know how to have difficult conversations to uphold the organization's standards and how to separate the person from the situation. I know how to hold difficult conversations when needed, instead of shying away from such conversations, to protect the organization's integrity while maintaining professionalism with all staff.
- I can contribute to the never-ending path of improvement we want for all staff and students. The practice or craft of all adults needs to improve for students to progress academically. By becoming a Coach Leader through Results Coaching, I have enhanced my practice. I now coach my teaching staff in a way that draws their skills and knowledge forward.
- I can foster a culture of shared responsibility, integrity, and a "whatever it takes" attitude among staff, students, and parents. As a Coach Leader, I can cultivate a culture of teamwork and trust. With my guidance as a Coach Leader, the adults and I are on track to reach the school's vision for 100 percent of its students. I could never lead such a charge without Results Coaching.

REBA SCHUMACHER

PCC, Principal, Director, and Results Coaching Senior Instructor (Texas)

When asked to recount my transformation as a coach, I couldn't help but remember the dialogue from Ernest Hemingway's (1926) novel *The Sun Also Rises*, when Bill asks, "How did you go bankrupt?" and Mike responds, "Two ways. Gradually and then suddenly" (p. 141). I can relate to this concept as I apply it to my journey as a coach. For me, the "gradually" part came by participating in countless hours of in-person, coach-specific professional development and hundreds of hours of practical application with numerous clients. By 2008, about three years after my first coaching seminar, I earned my initial coaching certification (ACC), and three years later, I proudly displayed my second certification (PCC) on my website. Oh, I knew all the skills of coaching. Could I listen with the best and paraphrase? Yes, indeed; I had brevity down to an art, and if you ask me, my powerful, open-ended questions were exquisite. Unfortunately, at this phase, I didn't know what I didn't know.

It took a young first-year elementary school principal to get me off my "gradual" growth to the "sudden" part of my transformation. Let's call her Suzanne to protect her anonymity.

Suzanne was a new client, and I had been coaching for a few months, when one day, she called my cell phone. She asked if I had time for a spontaneous coaching session. She had an unexpected and time-sensitive challenge and wanted a thinking partner. Sensing the urgency in her voice, I passed the trust-building part of the conversation and jumped right in with the question I had been taught to ask: “So, Suzanne, what are we going to talk about today?” Her bright and cheerful response was, “We’re going to talk about how I’m going to raise a million dollars.” I was grateful that we were on the phone, not in person or on Zoom, because she couldn’t see my visceral reaction to her topic. I later wondered if she could hear my eyes rolling. I resisted the urge to respond with, “Why not just give me world peace or no world hunger?” Instead, I came back with, “Great! Let’s get started. So, you want to raise a million dollars.” Suzanne agreed that was her goal.

Tapping back into my hours of coaching training, my next question was one my mentor coach taught me: “What is important for you to share for me to be your thinking partner?” For the next several minutes, I listened carefully as Suzanne shared that her school district had just passed a bond election, which provided all new elementary schools for the district. In the pursuit of equity, the school board and the superintendent had directed that every elementary school would use the same architectural plan. All elementary campuses would have the same floor plan and would look exactly alike. The only variation was that school colors could be used for internal decor. Suzanne went on to remind me that her school was the district STEM school, and the district architectural plan did not include a STEM lab. She ended with, “I just can’t have a STEM school without a science and technology lab.”

Remembering that Suzanne was a first-year principal and knowing that to first-year principals, nothing is impossible, I was certain she had already taken some action. Naturally, I followed up with, “What have you already done to meet your goal?” She quickly responded that she had a meeting with the facilities director for her district. She told him that her school would need a STEM lab, and she was requesting the plan be modified to include one. He emphatically responded, “No, Suzanne, that’s impossible. I have direct orders from the superintendent and the school board that every school will be just the same.”

Remember, we were dealing with a first-year principal, and nothing is impossible.

Her next visit was to the architect. This time, she spoke with more passion: “You are going to need to redo the architectural plan for my school.” He again replied, “No, Suzanne, all schools must be the same. I have strict orders from the superintendent and the school board.”

Suzanne’s third visit was to the superintendent himself. She said to him, “I’m going to need a different addition to my school. We are going to need a STEM lab.”

The superintendent had a little more leeway than the others, and he didn’t have the heart to say no, so he responded, “Suzanne, you can have a STEM lab with one caveat: You will need to find a way to raise the money, and I’m told the cost will be a million dollars.”

Suzanne ended her story with a cheerful announcement: “So that’s why I am here. I need a plan to raise a million dollars.” I took a deep breath and thought, “Oh dear, who’s going to tell her?” While I wanted to model the mindset of a coach and believe she could

make it happen, I also learned a few things about her school. It was the poorest school in an otherwise somewhat wealthy district. Ninety-eight percent of her students were on free and reduced lunch. There was no parent teacher association to help fundraise; there was no community support for this poor school. All I could think about was how sadly this was going to end. I wanted to protect her from heartbreak and offer my advice to give up or use an empty classroom as a makeshift lab rather than face inevitable disappointment, and perhaps even embarrassment. Instead, I offered in my best coaching voice, “What would you like to take from this conversation?”

Suzanne asked for a plan to raise one million dollars, and I enthusiastically replied, “Great! Let’s get started. What have you already thought about doing?” We talked and planned. While I asked powerful questions in my role as a thought partner, I thought, *I don’t have the heart to tell her. This is going to be so sad.*

Approximately a month later, Suzanne called for her scheduled coaching session, and I greeted her with, “What are you sharing today?” She replied, “Well, I got my million dollars!” It’s a good thing we were on the phone, not in person or on Zoom, because she couldn’t see the incredulous look on my face. Despite my previous doubts, I could only respond with a weak, “Well, I knew you would. What did you do?” With great conviction, she announced, “I just followed the plan we made.”

While Suzanne had the poorest school, she lived in a wealthy community with numerous oil and natural gas funded family foundations. She visited each of them, sharing the stories of her students, the gaps, the disadvantages, the poverty, the lack, the reasons for needing the lab, and the experiences she hoped to provide for her students. She told a compelling story. One after another, the foundations wrote her checks. When she reached \$350,000, she made an appointment with the superintendent and gave him an update on her progress. After hearing her story, he said, “Well, Suzanne, if I’d known you wanted the STEM lab that badly, I would have given it to you to start with.” He committed to giving her the remaining money.

That day, I transformed (suddenly) from acting as a coach to being a coach. My teacher was a young first-year principal who believed in herself more than I did. What I learned is that the mindset of a coach is to believe in the impossible. What if I had given in to my instincts to advise her to settle for something less? If I had, students would have missed the opportunity to learn in a beautiful, state-of-the-art STEM lab, and a young principal, who only saw what was possible, would have never realized her dream.

After all, as Hemingway (2003) wisely writes, “The way to make people trust-worthy is to trust them” (p. 805).

PAM SMITH

PCC, Principal, Director, Assistant to the Superintendent, and Results Coaching Senior Instructor (Texas)

As a teacher and then principal leader, I have always been very collaborative and open to new ideas—sometimes too open. I tended to try everything in hopes of finding some new

strategies to work with all kinds of students as my school was going through tremendous change in students—highly mobile and diverse in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language development. In fact, my staff would call me “Pilot Pam,” and eventually, I learned to choose the best program for that situation. I did possess a win-win mentality, as with every phone call to parents, I wanted to end with both of us getting what we wanted. I used such language as “I knew you would want to know what happened today at school,” and then I would have their child share what they had done. I think I won parents and teachers over, as I stayed positive throughout and looked for the best in others. Based on my success, I was then moved to the central office to train new principals. In that role, I continued to look for new learnings that helped me grow and flourish.

During that time in the central office, I discovered and began my training with Results Coaching. We had a role similar to a coach in most of our schools but didn’t have the language needed to succeed. We did more telling than listening. Throughout my training, I began to realize what needed to be changed. It was all about using the latest brain research in coaching to determine the language we use.

The transformation began for me when my best friend of thirty years was diagnosed at age fifty-two with pancreatic cancer. Throughout my training, I asked to be coached on how to be there for her. How could I meet her needs as a best friend and listener? Results Coaching coaches helped me with the gift of listening—being able to sit in silence by her side and show my love for her by not saying anything, and when I did, it was in her service (“What, if anything, do you want right now?”). It was difficult, as I am a doer, and now she needed me to “be” with her. She lived six more months after her diagnosis, and I had the time to tell her—and, hopefully, show her through my actions—how much our friendship meant to me. Words do matter!

I was promoted to assistant to the superintendent during this time and had the opportunity to use my skills of listening, paraphrasing, and presuming positive intent in my new role, interacting with angry parents, resolving conflict with school staff, and facilitating community groups.

A year after I retired from my school district, the principals went to the superintendent and said, “We need another Pam. She believed in us. She listened and always seemed to say or ask what we needed to hear.”

Even my own family said, “You’re different.” My niece used to say, “Don’t use that coaching stuff on me.” Now she says, “I am looking for a new job. Would you coach me about it?” or “Would you coach my friend?” My sis says, “I want to learn to talk to Kate like you do.”

Coaching has been the greatest gift I could have been given. It has changed my relationships with others in how I show up and who I want to be. So, I am passionate about sharing this same gift with others. I also show up for myself differently, as I now stop and think, “Why am I doing this, and how is it making me who I want to be?”

HANK STAGGS

Principal, Professor, and Director (Tennessee)

As a new principal at age twenty-seven with a new degree in school leadership, I was under the impression that everything I did had to be “right.” Although I did a lot of reflecting, learning, and trying, there were several big gaps in my leadership. The first obvious gap was the little experience and the naivete that I needed to know all the answers to all the school’s problems. I gave a lot of advice with a well-intended desire to help fix all problems. I thought that was my job. It was a futile, exhausting effort, to say the least. My impact as a leader was limited to my own inexperience and handcuffed desire to fix all problems. I think our faculty and staff appreciated the effort, but at the end of the day, they were not inspired by the leader (me) to grow, engage, and collaborate. I left each day a bit more frustrated about why folks weren’t buying in and wondering why we were not growing and improving as a school.

The district administration required principals to attend a summer professional development session in coaching. It was my introduction to Results Coaching. That was all I knew about Results Coaching at the time. For me, it would be another professional development session that, if good, I might pay half attention to. The sessions were good; in fact, they were excellent—highly engaging, informative, relevant, and full of practical skills that literally transformed my leadership.

Learning from Results Coaching that I did not have to have all the answers as a leader was very freeing. Exploring various roles that a school leader plays was enlightening and gave me a new perspective on how actually to lead. When the training highlighted these roles and landed on “coach,” this resonated. Not only was it freeing and enlightening, but it also allowed me to envision leadership in which I could actually make a difference in the lives of those I lead. I didn’t waste any time attempting to implement coach language and asking reflective questions. I stopped trying to fix everyone’s problems almost immediately. However, becoming a Coach Leader was not a quick or easy process. I had more than one teacher tell me, “Please stop coaching me!” I’m so glad I stuck with it.

It’s been more than twelve years since coaching transformed my leadership, and my mindset, behaviors, and language are vastly different—for the better! I now believe that as principal, my job is to coach and inspire. It’s no longer my job to have all the answers but to empower the experts (our teachers) to find the answers within themselves. I believe the coaching skills are universal and extend beyond just those I directly supervise. My default mode has become a coach, even if I’m with a student, parent, colleague, or friend.

After serving in various roles in educational leadership and now being a veteran principal, being a coach first helps those around me feel valued, inspired, and successful. I’m no longer trying to win; I’m helping them win. The language and skills have allowed me to build positive relationships, have difficult conversations, and bring out the best in others. I joined a new school just a year and a half ago. Our faculty and staff’s perceptions of leadership increased by 25 percentage points and are now over 92 percent in the most recent survey. I

attribute this to leading as a coach and implementing the skills I first learned from Results Coaching. Coaching is truly transformational and has made all the difference in my life and in those I have been honored to lead.

NATHAN STEENPORT

PCC, Principal, and Consultant (Texas)

Before embarking on my journey with Results Coaching, I was a principal with three years of experience, proficient in building relationships with students, staff, and parents. However, despite considering myself a good principal, I felt there was room for improvement to reach greatness. While I excelled in clear communication and direction, I lacked the ability to inspire others to take initiative and lead in their own capacities. Recognizing the need to deepen my skills in inspiring growth and sustaining relationships, I sought further professional development.

Fully committed to continuous improvement, I attended the initial Results Coaching session in the summer of 2019, and from that moment on, I was captivated. Through the program, I enhanced my leadership skills and grew as a husband and father, learning the art of effective listening and genuine partnership with those I serve and love. As I progressed through subsequent sessions, I noticed tangible improvements in my abilities. This was particularly evident during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, when I was able to support both parents and teachers through my coaching, helping them devise solutions tailored to their specific needs. These experiences fostered deep and lasting connections with those I worked with, enriching my personal and professional relationships.

While completing my ICF certification through Results Coaching, I transitioned to a full-time coaching role, leveraging my background to collaborate closely with campus principals and district leaders in developing effective systems within their schools and districts. Coaching has empowered them to address issues efficiently while allowing me to be viewed as an invaluable resource. Through this work, I have clarified my values and prioritized quality time with my family, achieving a sense of fulfillment and gratitude. I deeply appreciate the dedication of the Results Coaching team to shaping the world of coaching and enabling personal and professional growth.

CATHERINE STEPHENS

Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent (Tennessee)

I had been in leadership for fourteen years before Results Coaching training, coaches, mentors, books, and resources came into my life. I would categorize my mindset as a mixed bag; for some topics, I maintained more of a fixed mindset, while for others, I had more of a growth mindset. By the way, if you had asked me this at the time, I would have said I was fully a growth mindset leader. I was a relational leader who knew that successful work was cultivating people and building capacity, but I was more directive in my language and did things that made people say “Hmmm . . .” I demonstrated a confident posture and

spoke clearly—or so I thought. When addressing individuals or groups (notice the word *addressing*), I believed that I built team membership and that everyone felt good about and a part of the decisions I made. I spoke with individual phrases like “What I hear you saying is . . .”—which, in retrospect, stilted the conversation, because when I got it wrong (meaning, I didn’t “hear” correctly), there were many times where the person in the conversation did not say anything back to me. I may not have heard right, but the person did not want to correct me. Also, this demonstrated the more direct approach I used and how folks responded to it. Ugh!

Following a lesson, I could be heard asking, “Why did you use that approach?” I was intrigued and wanted to know more, yet it sounded like judgment. There was that fixed mindset showing up, even if it wasn’t fixed—it just sounded that way. Big sigh! I was a leader folks followed, as they knew they were getting honesty and fairness. (Although, at the time, I did not know or understand the brain connection to fairness.) I had high expectations in all areas (from dress code to implementation of proven practices in the classroom) and, at times, may have created a stressful feeling as a result of the way I communicated those standards (again, in a directive manner), but my heart and intent were in the right place. Fortunately, through many years and levels (and even repeats of levels and courses) of Results Coaching training, I have grown into a true Coach Leader. With that said, there are those moments (albeit rare) where I must speak with a direct approach, as the situation or event requires it.

I joined a district as the assistant superintendent in a state where Race to the Top funds were awarded. Each district was able to utilize the funds for an array of reasons, and our system wanted to develop leaders. After researching, it was clear that Results Coaching was the right fit for training our leaders to have a coaching mindset, with strategies and techniques for them to use routinely. In 2012, I participated in Leadership Coaching for High Performance, a level 1 course, and my life changed! Learning, reading, rehearsing, and developing coaching practices through genuine (not contrived) practice, with immediate feedback, helped unlock a door to the leader I aspired to be. My heart and intent were still the same, but my leadership skills had changed by the time the course ended.

As I began to demonstrate a coach mindset approach to leading, I kept SCARF at the forefront of my mind. This neuroscience came alive for me! Each day, I walked with an imaginary scarf on and, in my mind, wrapped it around the person I was listening to as a reminder of their importance in adding to the conversation and to help me stay grounded. Right there was a shift: I was not moving into a conversation to talk; I was there to listen thoughtfully, paraphrase, pose thought-provoking questions, seek clarity, and presume positive intent along the way. My mind became open and clear when I was with team members, as opposed to being cluttered with my ideas and what I wanted to get across. Are you hearing that directive style in there?

As I believed in building the capacity of those around me, I began genuinely believing in the person and their ability and talent to navigate situations, lessons, goals, and challenges. The answer lies within that person, but coaching helps them along their journey of being their best self. I feel relief—I don’t have to have all the answers. I don’t have to know

everything. The language of coaching, be it the coaching frame or the elements within it, is a natural part of who I am. I recognize that not every conversation is a coaching conversation, but in every conversation, I use the skills of a Coach Leader.

Modeling as a Coach Leader profoundly impacts those I lead and support. I get phone calls or visits where a leader asks, "Do you have time to be a thinking partner with me?" This simple question demonstrates trust and allows the two of us to think together on the topic needing exploration. The truth is, we both know I don't have the answer to the question, which is freeing, but together, as we set up an agreement and move toward it, the person eventually comes to a solution or decision and the next step. I am just along for the ride, and what a great one it is!

It is rewarding to hear principals engage in conversations after teacher evaluations, listening as they pose questions that presume positive intent. Seeing the skills, even the small ones, come alive in the elements of the work demonstrates the impact of one Coach Leader on another.

THE POWER OF REACH COACHING

In addition to the story already included on page XX, we invited Reba to share another aspect of her story, a remarkable testament to the power of transformation. Her journey is nothing short of magical as we reflect on our leaders over the years and witness the profound and inspiring changes that have unfolded before our eyes.

A Story of Transformation in the Food Service Industry

On a mid-January day in 2019 in the Austin Independent School District, our audience differed from the typical group of teachers, principals, assistant principals, and instructional coaches we customarily instructed. In the city that is the home of Sixth Street, SXSW, and Keep Austin Weird, an innovative superintendent and deputy superintendent made the decision to first introduce our four-day coaching seminar to their upper-level district administrators, including deputy superintendent, assistant superintendents, chiefs of departments, and executive directors. They were an affable, intelligent group who saw value in coaching and who agreed that their direct reports would benefit from adding coaching to their leadership skills.

The January group was the second group in the Austin Independent School District to participate in a four-day coaching seminar and consisted of a wide range of executive leaders who reported to the first group. I had never taught a group that included the assistant police chief or the assistant chief financial officer. These were the boots-on-the-ground leaders who made sure schools were kept safe, materials and supplies were purchased, salaries were paid, employee benefits were provided, staff



were hired, and high-stakes state testing was appropriately administered and monitored.

As we progressed through the first day, we presented our standard curriculum: why to use coaching, traditional versus 21st century leadership styles, and the mindset of a Coach Leader. What started as an interestingly unique learning opportunity began to be overshadowed by a palpable tension in the room. One participant, who had positioned herself at one of the front tables, began to challenge, question, and push back, regardless of what we said or taught. She failed to see the relevance of our sample language stems that were heavily biased toward coaching in the instructional side of schools, and she kept probing and persisting with questions that leaned toward how this type of leadership would benefit her and her team. Initially, I was annoyed by her frequent interruptions, and my first impulse was to ignore her, hoping she would eventually stop the steady flow of questions.

Eventually, my annoyance was replaced with curiosity, and I became intrigued by the rationale behind the probing questions. That's the day I met Anneliese. My self-talk was "Coach, heal thyself," and I began to listen—really listen. She simply wanted to understand how coaching applied to school-kitchen managers and staff, child-nutrition supervisors, procurement staff, chefs, nutritionists, warehouse workers, and truck drivers. At the age of thirty, Anneliese was hired as executive director for Nutrition and Food Services and Warehouse Services. Not only was she responsible for ensuring that over seventy thousand students were fed every day, but she was also responsible for ensuring that anything purchased to ensure the smooth running of schools was received, inventoried, and delivered to over one hundred schools. Anneliese was only in her early thirties and directly and indirectly supervising 750 employees; now, she was being asked to coach them as well. Coaching just didn't align with anything she had been taught in her business model training, and, in her estimation, we weren't offering language that matched what she did.

Over the course of the four-day seminar, she kept asking questions, and I stayed with her. Together, we learned, created, crafted, and practiced how to coach in her world of purchasing, preparing, planning, inventorying, stocking, delivering, and providing delicious, appealing, and nutritious meals. Together, we explored and developed strategic language for the business side of schools. At the conclusion of the four days, Anneliese hired me to coach her and her assistant director, and she scheduled a four-day training for her direct reports. For the next two years, we worked closely together as I coached her on how to coach and provide reflective feedback for her staff. She developed language relevant to her staff and proved to herself that coaching at any level of an organization is the way to inspire and motivate others to engage in their work.

Anneliese's successful track record in providing high-quality, nutritious meals for students led her to an unanticipated pathway, and two years after our first meeting, she joined the staff of the Chef Ann Foundation. The Chef Ann Foundation is a nonprofit working with public and private schools in all fifty U.S. states. It is dedicated to promoting whole-ingredient scratch cooking in schools. Scratch cooking enables schools to serve the healthiest, tastiest meals they can so that students are well nourished and ready to learn. The Chef Ann Foundation helps schools feed students healthy, nutritious food, and to date, the foundation has reached 3.4 million students in fourteen thousand schools. Their vision includes fostering a generation of healthy eating.

The Chef Ann Foundation launched the Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship in January 2023. The vision is ambitious: to develop the next generation of diverse leaders in scratch-cooking school food operations who can support a sustainable program and drive school food reform.

For seven months, the Chef Ann Foundation conducted an intensive study of the skills and professional development opportunities that would be provided for selected Healthy School Food Pathway participants.

During the planning process, Anneliese shared with the group the significant impact of the communication skills of listening, paraphrasing, and presuming positive intent, as well as the effect Results Coaching's reflective feedback, enhanced by the International Coaching Federation's (2021) Core Competencies, had on her leadership success. Based on her recommendation, Results Coaching's Leadership Coaching for High Performance seminar was selected as the leadership component of the Healthy School Food Pathway professional development offerings.

Many of us may remember the school food of our youth, when the enticing aroma of Miss Mabel's freshly baked-from-scratch yeast rolls permeated the entire school or when the savory smell of Mrs. Williams's homemade beef stew wafted through the hallways, causing little tummies to noticeably rumble. Somewhere along the way in the busyness of curriculum alignments, implementing PLCs, and conducting teacher appraisals and high-stakes testing, those of us on the instructional side of school business may not have noticed that school meals were changing. It wasn't until I had lunch with my granddaughter in her school cafeteria in another state that I came to the shocking realization that Miss Mabel was no longer in the kitchen. I watched student after student place tray after tray on the table around me. I noticed that each tray contained four to five items sealed in cellophane or contained in paper cartons. As I studied each item, I was reminded of food from a vending machine. As I watched the students open the plastic wrappers, I noticed that the food appeared to be cold, mostly processed, and neutral in color. One little girl futilely attempted to eat a frozen fruit cup and finally gave up because her plastic spoon didn't make a dent in the block of ice. The frozen fruit cup ended up

in the trash. I wasn't surprised that my granddaughter insisted on taking her lunch from home daily.

This unfortunate evolution of school meals may be what inspired the Chef Ann Foundation's vision to support school meal programs by serving more scratch-cooked meals. When we met with that first group of Healthy School Food Pathway participants, over the span of eight sessions, we learned that their greatest challenge wasn't just from the policymakers above them; they were also challenged by the frontline workers in the school kitchens. Prepackaged foods had become the status quo, and frankly, it was just easier for staff, who were struggling under the burden of the already hard work of filling student trays with pre-prepared foods. The Healthy School Food Pathway cohort came to our seminar seeking a skill set for changing the firmly ingrained mindset of "We've always done it this way." There wasn't much incentive to take on a project (such as scratch cooking) that would make the already hard work even harder.

What sets the Healthy School Food Pathway participants apart is that they are visionaries. They have a purpose far greater than just getting students fed. They understand that for some students, school meals are their only nourishment each day. They are driven by a belief that fresh, healthy, delicious meals shouldn't be just for students whose families can afford good food. While some of the cooks in the school kitchens perceived fresh salad bars and made-from-scratch foods containing proteins, vegetables, and grains as untenable, the food service directors saw them as non-negotiable. They came to our coaching seminar looking for a different approach to leadership. They came looking for skills and tools to inspire and motivate their frontline workers to embrace higher standards for feeding all students.

At the end of the year-long fellowship, the initial Healthy School Food Pathway group gave the senior coordinator of the project some feedback regarding the various professional development opportunities they received. Most described the Results Coaching Leadership Coaching for High Performance seminar as one of the most valuable learning experiences during their year-long study. The first-year cohort emphatically stated that the coaching seminar should be held in person for the second-year cohort rather than through virtual sessions. Based on that recommendation, we met the second cohort of the Healthy School Food Pathway in late February 2024 in Napa, California. We instructed, modeled, and practiced coaching skills and tools for three days. By the third day, an elite group of twenty-four school food-service directors from Boston to San Diego to Madison to Baton Rouge were sitting in groups of three or four in the beautiful California sun, using their newly acquired skills and tools to coach one another. They were coaching their peers on real topics and familiar challenges that mattered to them and the students they served.

Return on investment! At the conclusion of the coaching seminars, both cohorts (2023 and 2024) shared what they learned in the Leadership Coaching for High Performance seminar. Frequently noted learning patterns were an awareness of the necessity of truly listening in conversations, acquiring a new language for leading, and developing highly effective ways to give feedback to colleagues and direct reports: by presuming positive intent and cultivating tools and a framework for using coaching as a go-to on the fly or in more formal conversations. Eight of the twenty-four participants in the Napa seminar shared that they felt empowered to lead through coaching. The remaining participants mentioned feeling more capable of creating change in their districts and developing potential in their direct reports; others were inspired to “be the difference” and believed they were better prepared as problem solvers. Some even noted that leadership coaching matched their guiding values and principles and helped them identify their personal leadership style.

After participants returned to their respective districts, some were surveyed to determine how they were applying coaching. Many viewed it as a new and practical approach to leading. Several shared they already saw the impact of empowering, encouraging, and inspiring their teams to change how they listen and communicate with one another. Others mentioned personal efficacy and increased confidence in one-on-one and team coaching conversations.

One district food-service director, who we'll call Margaret, shared that the coaching seminar gave her the courage to return to her district and have a difficult coaching conversation with a highly competent but negative kitchen manager, Sara. At the conclusion of the conversation, Sara thanked Margaret. She confided that a friend recently told her she needed to work on the way she communicates. Margaret continued by saying that Sara had come up with several good insights. “She appreciated that I came to her and said she is invested in making things better,” Margaret said.

Margaret reflected on her conversation:

I really appreciate having my new coaching skills because the need to have this conversation has been on my mind for some time now. I did not know what to do to begin to fix this. Coaching enables me to work toward being the leader I aspire to be, and I am so grateful.

Another director shared that the coaching seminar inspired him to return to his district and challenge his team members to find something important to them in their work, noting that they often suffer under the stress of daily difficult work. He is coaching them to find the greater purpose in the work in the hope that the load will lighten.

The involvement with the Chef Ann Foundation began with Anneliese. Because she recommended our coaching program as the leadership component of the Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship, public school kitchens across the nation are now being impacted. Her journey with coaching continues in her new role as the executive director of Food and Nutrition Services for Boston Public Schools. Recently, I reminded her of that younger Anneliese who sat in the meeting room in Austin, Texas, and pushed, probed, and insisted until she found meaning in coaching. We shared a laugh, and then she resorted to that very serious Anneliese by remembering:

As a new leader, I was really struggling with leading my team effectively because I was using the dictatorial approach I had experienced growing up and early on in my career. Learning how to lead with a coaching mindset allowed me to show up for my team in the way they needed to make impactful change and feel valued. Using the coaching tools also taught me how to interact with my family, leading to stronger, more meaningful personal relationships grounded in trust and connection.

—Reba Schumacher, PCC, principal, director, and
Results Coaching senior instructor, Texas

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